

Original Article

Assessment of observing nursing job descriptions in Sabzevar City, IranMehdi Jamalini¹, Ali Vahidi-Sabzevar², Mohammad Siavoshi^{1*}¹ Department of Nursing, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Sabzevar University of Medical Sciences, Sabzevar, Iran² Northeast Petroleum Company, Sarakhs, Iran

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ABSTRACT

Background & Aim: Nursing occupation is an activity based on the moral and legal obligations. One of the important responsibilities of nurses is to gain knowledge and observe the laws and regulations related to their profession. The most important role of nurses is to restore health through care activities. Nurses can fulfill their tasks only when they have enough knowledge on their duties and responsibilities. One of the important tasks of nursing managers is to prepare nursing staff members and ensure the correctness of their performance for the assigned activities. Therefore, the present study was performed aiming to investigate barriers and provide solutions for performing nursing tasks.

Methods & Materials: This descriptive cross-sectional study was performed on 120 nurses, midwives, and nursing managers working in Vasei Hospital and Emdad Shahid Beheshti Hospital of Sabzevar City, Iran. The nurses were selected through stratified random sampling method. The study instruments included demographic information questionnaire and a researcher-made questionnaire on the organizational task description including 41 questions related to nursing and quality of life (QOL). Data were analyzed by SPSS software.

Results: The mean age and clinical experience of the study subjects were 29.11 ± 4.67 and 6.40 ± 11.30 years, respectively. Participants included 42 (35%) and 78 (65%) men and women, respectively. 62%, 33%, and 5% of the subjects were nurses, practical nurses, and managing nurses, respectively. The results showed that the inappropriateness of the number of nurses and patients and the use of newly recruited forces in the managerial dimension, shortage of in-service and retraining courses in hospitals in the educational dimension, inadequate welfare and recreational facilities and increasing wages in the motivational dimension, and the lack of necessary space and nurses' working hours in the environmental and professional dimension were the most important barriers.

Conclusion: In order to solve problems, proposed solutions, criteria and scores, and ultimately, top solutions in each area are presented separately. In the managerial-executive field, disparity between nurses and patients has been reported as the main factor. In the professional environment, the high volume of nursing hours has been reported per week, and in the field of individuality and nursing, insufficient salary and wages of the subjects are barriers to performing nursing tasks.

Introduction

Professional nursing is vital in providing,

maintaining, and promoting the individual health in society (1) and a direct and immediate service that covers a wide range of patients, clients, groups, and communities throughout their lives (2). This profession is one of the cornerstones of health care systems with the highest number of nurses among health service providers.

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Providing and promoting human health, which is the main goal of this profession, is to use modern scientific principles, utilize human and religious methods, and communicate with the patient based on the accessible principles of science of medical ethics (3).

The position of the nursing group is defined as a pattern of observance of ethical principles, which will play a primary role in promoting and improving health (especially psychologically), preventing illness, and relieving the pain of the patients. Increasing the scope of nurses' authority and responsibility relative to past requires a high level of knowledge and skills among the nurses and also their ability to make suitable decisions (3). The basis of a business organization is that managers are familiar with their job responsibilities to the fullest extent (1). Similarly, familiarity with the rules and regulations governing nursing is one of the priorities of nursing training programs. Therefore, keeping pace within the framework of criteria and descriptions of nursing tasks is one of the most important issues that should be considered (3).

Since providing care is the integral part of the nursing profession, it is necessary to establish and develop nursing practice standards for this profession. The main goal of these standards is to promote, direct, and lead the nurses' professional practice. In other words, the goal is to create a correct framework to ensure the provision of safe nursing care, promoting good performance, and preventing adverse effects (2). Nurses as professional individuals are committed to the development and implementation of standards through their professional knowledge and professionalism through the acquisition of knowledge and critical application.

Standards reflect the values of the profession and clarify the expectations of the responsible organizations of nurses. It is also the duty of all nurses and employers to know the nursing profession standards and apply them to nursing practices (4).

Therefore, familiarity with these standards and the content of nursing rules and regulations and its changes can be considered as a guide to

the establishment of relationships while performing their duties. In addition, the assigned responsibilities are consistent and congruous with the ethics of the profession and they are presented in desirable quality. In this case, nurses should recognize the law as a key element of their work in order to protect the legal process in the decision-making process and, if necessary, protect it (3).

According to idea proposed by Gillies, setting up job descriptions and identifying communications and goals is helping to create the right and most desirable working conditions. Writing description of tasks and duties for all nursing staff is reasonable and necessary (5).

In another study by Kapborg and Fischbein, some nurses also described the ambiguity in job descriptions as powerless factor (6). Moreover, the study by Adib Haj bagheri et al. also showed that the ambiguity and lack of observance of tasks were among the issues that interfered with the duties and reduced the scope of the nurse's powers (7).

The issue of dissatisfaction, complaints, and litigation of patients from the medical staff due to violations and diagnostic, treatment, and care errors are among the most important issues of society, which is being discussed today in medical and legal centers. Nurses and medical staff are directly and indirectly responsible for their mistakes in any position on the patients.

Therefore, in case of the lack of skill and ease of treatment and/or failure to comply with governmental regulations and medical standards, which cause damages to patients, the nurses must compensate for it. In this case, the nurses may also be fined, or in case of material damage to the patients, they may also be convicted (3).

On the contrary, if the nurse, paramedic, and other members of the team have taken medical treatment or duties in accordance with the medical conditions and instructions and directives of their affiliated ministry based on the professional standards of the country, or have a sense of responsibility and act on the basis of the ethical rules, there will be no situation of the patient complaint to be filed, and if the duties are fulfilled as planned, the complaints will be void (3).

By specializing in hospital departments, hospital managers demand the qualified human resources to perform high quality clinical skills (8). Since nursing requires special knowledge and experience, nurses can be assigned tasks to act in a way that is sufficient and they are sufficiently aware of the duties and responsibilities, so that they can perform the tasks completely (9). However, based on the experience of the regarding the inadequate observance of nursing rules and standards in the community, the researchers intended to examine how nurses work and the obstacles in their tasks hoping to be able to take a small step in the direction of improving the nursing profession.

Methods

This was a descriptive cross-sectional study with problem solving method. The research population in this study included all nurses and managers working in Vasei and Emdad Shahid Beheshti hospitals affiliated to Sabzevar University of Medical Sciences, Iran, in 2017.

The sample size was calculated according to the 95% confidence interval (CI) and using the following formula: $n = (z_{1-\alpha/2})^2 pq/d^2$, where p was the number of execution tasks, and the number of samples were calculated to be 120. At first, the subjects were selected according to the study inclusion criteria and through the simple random sampling method.

Inclusion criteria were: full satisfaction of participation in the study, being course nurse (during education), being the nurse during the first years of professional performance, and also the nurse working in the special departments, lack of mental disorders (anxiety, depression, etc.), physical health, and age range of 22-45 years.

In addition, the exclusion criteria included: Failure to fully complete the information form and declaration of withdrawal after initial satisfaction announcement.

The data collection tool was a demographic data form and a researcher-made job description form. This form was derived from standard forms of description of tasks in the nursing system organization and also from related articles and books. This form contained 41 questions related

to nursing standard responsibilities and duties, 20, 4, and 17 of which being specific to nurses, nursing assistance, and common to nursing and nursing care, respectively.

The content validity method was used to assess the validity of the tool, so that the researcher form was first provided to 10 faculty members of the faculty and then they were asked to express their views on the questions of this form, then their opinions were applied in the form and finally, the final approval of all these individuals was reached and the original form was provided for the subjects.

After approving the tool and obtaining relevant legal permissions from the university, the researchers referred to the hospitals and after completing the necessary steps, performed sampling in the research environment. Eventually, after referring to both hospitals and collection of the required sample size, the questionnaires were collected and the data and the findings were analyzed.

After confirming the problem in the first stage, in the second stage, the barriers and causes of non-observance of job descriptions during search of databases, books on self-report by nurses and managers, related articles, and experiences of nurses, practitioners, and the research team were extracted. These obstacles and problems were arranged in three dimensions of nursing, management and executive, and work environment and equipment with 6, 6, and 3 terms, respectively. Then they were distributed among 20 experienced managers and nurses participating in the study. In the next step, each of these individuals began to prioritize their own point of view. To explain the other causes that were not mentioned and intended by individuals, an open question was also used at the end of the questionnaire.

Results

The mean age of the subjects was 29.11 ± 4.67 years, with a minimum and a maximum of 24 and 41 years, respectively. In addition, the mean clinical work experience of the study subjects was 6.4 ± 11.3 years. Participants included 42 (35%) and 78 (65%) men and women, respectively.

Table 1. Ranking causes of inadequate observance of job description in terms of subjects from the most important cause to the least important

Rank	Reason	Coefficient
1	Disparity between the number of nurses and hospitalized patients	1.19
2	Inadequate education in the field of job descriptions of nursing during education	1.20
3	Insufficient pay and salary	1.42
4	High work volume and work hours per week	1.42
5	Lack of familiarity of non-nursing managers with the description of nursing duties	1.48
6	Lack of job satisfaction among nurses	1.53
7	Weakness in the control and monitoring system	1.55
8	Failure to observe the principles of job description in promoting nurses	1.56
9	Lack of awareness among nurses of nursing duties	1.98
10	Lack of facilities and adequate space	2.13
11	Old equipment and facilities	2.14
12	Negligence among nurses	2.18

62%, 33%, and 5% of the subjects were nurses, nurse assistances, and managing nurses, respectively. 91% were married and the majority of them (82%) had a bachelor's degree and higher education. The mean compliance rates were 37.2% and 42.62% in Emdad Shahid Beheshti Hospital and Vasei Hospital, respectively. The mean total observance of job descriptions in the two hospitals was 39.63%, which indicated a lack of observance of job descriptions in the hospitals.

Other issues raised in the open question answer:

- ✓ Failure to hold retraining courses on the responsibilities and legal issues of nurses
- ✓ Disparity in the use of auxiliary forces in the departments and, hence, the assignment of part of the duties to other forces
- ✓ Lack of appropriate incentive system for motivating nurses
- ✓ Failure to observe job descriptions by some medical personnel and impose on nurses

Suggestions: A. How to extract suggested solutions:

These strategies have been developed using the articles and researches carried out in this regard, in addition, the suggestions of nurses and head nurses who responded to the open questionnaire were edited and presented in three areas (managerial-executive, professional-equipment, and nursing area).

A. Solutions related to management/executive issues:

1. Briefing sessions for familiarizing officials and doctors with nursing duties
2. Reminders and dealing with nurses in case of non-observance of the principles of job descriptions

3. Emphasizing the direct and indirect clinical supervision of nursing managers on nursing responsibilities

4. Applying new recruitment forces

5. Establishment of an annual workshop on the training of nurses and their placement in a systematic and continuous training program for nurses (9)

6. Increasing salaries and benefits

B. Solutions related to professional problems and equipment:

1. Using appropriate methods for division of works

2. Selection of optimal working hours of a shift by the nurses

3. Reduce weekly nurses' hours

4. Standardization of facilities and equipment of departments according to the needs of patients

5. Upgrading of hospital equipment

C. Solutions related to nursing problems:

1. Increasing the benefits and salary of nurses who are rigorous and diligent in carrying out their duties (9)

2. Providing superb facilities for nurses, including shopping vouchers, discount cards of using sports halls, swimming pools, etc. (9)

3. Providing brochures and training packages with the collaboration of nursing faculties and supervisors (9)

4. On time payments and fees of nurses

5. Respect for nursing staff by authorities, head nurses, and doctors

6. Appreciation and honor of nurses in different occasions of the year, especially the nurse's day

7. Warning and punishing nurses in case of

failure to comply with job descriptions

The findings of the review of the reasons for inadequate observance of duties and administrative barriers showed that according to the opinion of nurses and nursing managers working in the hospitals under study, the most important barriers to implementing the cases in the specialized tasks of nursing in the departments were prioritized as follows: inconsistency between the number of nurses and patients and insufficient salary in the managerial-executive dimension, lack of space and the high volume of nurses' working hours per week in the environment (equipment) dimension, and inadequate welfare and recreational facilities and low benefits for nursing staff in the nursing and individual care dimension with score coefficients of 1.19, 1.42, and 1.56, respectively (Table 1).

Discussion

Based on the findings of the present study, the managerial-executive dimension regarding the inconsistency between the number of nurses and patients with an average score of 1.19 accounted for the highest score and therefore the first priority. This factor reduces nurses' motivation in providing better services to patients. Management issues are factors that affect nursing job dissatisfaction (10). The problem of nursing communities is a shortage of staff and manpower worldwide. Many countries, including the US, UK, and Finland, are currently facing this problem (11). Nursing shortages and increasing the time required for nursing activities are major concerns in many countries (12). In the study by Milisen et al., the lack of manpower has been described as one of the problems of nurses (13). The study conducted by Lyons et al. showed that inadequate time to deal with patients and high workload were of the most important problems for nurses (14). In the study by Mrayyan, the most important problem of clinical nurses was the lack of necessary nurses (15). A study by Rostami et al. indicated that the shortage of staff in each shift was due to inadequate association with the patient (16). In the study by Allahyari and Alhani, the shortage

of nurses was the most important factor in the lack of using the patient's pain control tool in the department (17).

In the area of professionalism and equipment, the high volume of nurses' working hours per week (with a coefficient score of 1.42) and then lack of space (examination room, dressing room, playing room, etc.) for the implementation of specialized nursing duties in the ward (with coefficient score of 2.13) obtained high average scores in this area. In the study by KanKaarananta and Rissanen, the work environment has been described as one of the effective factors in the reluctance of nurses to continue their works (11). Salehi et al. reported that the lack of facilities in the workplace was one of the most important obstacles to the productivity of nurses (18). Allahyari and Alhani indicated that the lack of facilities in the environment was an obstacle to the use of pain relief methods from injections (17). It should be noted that the existence of a favorable environment for the use of acquired knowledge and skills is one of the important issues in the performance of graduates. Whenever performance in the clinical field is not at the level expected by the applicants, they must first examine the work environment as to whether sufficient equipment has been provided to them (18). In a study by Rostami et al, more than 85% of nurses in the children's departments were aware of the necessity of using distortion techniques for the child, and 85% of the nurses considered the child's desire for parental presence along with the nurses during the treatment (16).

In the individual and nursing area, inadequate salary and wages and then, nursing inadequate welfare and recreation facilities with average scores of 1.42 and 1.55, respectively, were barriers to the implementation of specific tasks of nursing in the department. Nursing is a professional service for human beings, which requires motivated and delicate employees. One of the key roles of nursing director is encouraging employees and motivating them to do so as job dissatisfaction reduces the quality of nursing care significantly (19). Raikkonen et al. concluded in their study that nurses who did not have adequate support from high-level

authorities, provided poor quality of care and needed support to provide higher-level care (20).

McGilton et al. also stated in their study that financial support for top officials would reduce work stress and increase job satisfaction (21). Chappell and Novak in their study, presented job rewards as a strategy to reduce the pressures imposed on nurses (22). The study by Kankaanranta and Rissanen, it was also showed that the amount of salary and income was inversely related to the willingness of nurses to leave their work (12).

Conclusion

In order to solve problems, proposed solutions, criteria and scores, and ultimately, top solutions in each area are presented separately. In the managerial-executive field, disparity between nurses and patients has been reported as the main factor. In the professional environment, the high volume of nursing hours per week has been reported as the problem, and in the field of individuality and nursing, insufficient salary and wages in terms of the study subjects are barriers to performing nursing tasks.

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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